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# WHEN THE YOUNG BIRDS GO

PAULINE B. BARRINGTON

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# WHEN THE YOUNG BIRDS GO

BY
PAULINE B. BARRINGTON

C. C. PARKER
LOS ANGELES, CAL.

PS635
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To
My Daughter
Deborah

#0.25

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No. 1.

## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

William Cort.
Ann Cort, his wife.
Laura Cort, their daughter (20 years old).
Morgan Terry, a young man (28 years old).
Japanese servant.
Action takes place one hour before dinner.

" . . . . . Suddenly
She sees the bloom of willows far and wide—"
—*Wang Ch'ang-ling.*

*(The scene is a living room in a country house in the suburbs of Los Angeles. At left a fireplace. Before it two chairs. At right book shelves and high casement window. At back door leading into hall, also a french window opening into garden. There are chairs, a center table and a sofa. A Victrola stands in corner. The setting sun streams through french window. There is an air of comfort and luxury about the room.)*

*(Laura Cort, a good-looking girl in golf clothes, comes in. She throws her soft hat and sweater on sofa. A Japanese servant follows wheeling a tea wagon. He places it at one side of fireplace.)*

LAURA. Mother home, Saito?

SAITO. No, Miss, no. She not home yet. *(Saito lights lamp under kettle. Exits.)*

LAURA. *(Sits on sofa. She takes a letter from her pocket and reads it. Smiles as she reads. Returns the letter slowly to it's envelope, holding it between her hands, looking down at it.)* Heavenly! Perfectly Heavenly! It seems too good to be true. But—what will Mother say? *(She shakes her head dubiously.)*

SAITO. *(He ushers in Morgan Terry.)* Mr. Terry, Miss. *(Exits.)*

LAURA. *(Springs up and welcomes Morgan with outstretched hands.)* Oh, Morg, this is bully!

MORGAN. Lucky to find you. I stopped in to make sure you'd go with me tonight. *(Still holds her hands, swinging them to and fro.)*

LAURA. Alone?

MORGAN. Just with me.

LAURA. I don't know whether I can. I haven't asked Mother yet.

MORGAN. Why shouldn't she let you? The other girls go with the men alone.

LAURA. *(Draws her hands from his and goes to the tea table.)* I know, but if Mother doesn't approve of it. It won't make any difference to her what the others do.

MORGAN. *(Follows her and stands back of her.)* Let's try our new dance anyway.

LAURA. Oh Goody! *(Turns and faces him.)*

MORGAN. We'll spring it on them at the dance tonight.

LAURA. Morgan, I love your suit.

MORGAN. Is that all you love? Can't you stretch it a little farther?

LAURA. *(She dances away from him.)* Oh yes, I love your tie too.

MORGAN. *(Chases her around table before he catches her.)* Laura, is your hair as soft as it looks? *(He puts his hand on her head, bends it back and swiftly kisses her.)*

LAURA. *(Pushes Morgan violently*

*away from her.)* Oh—how could you?

MORGAN. How could I help it? Laura, just one more - - *(He follows her as she goes to the tea table.)* You have jolly hair!

LAURA. Come, have some tea. Do be sensible.

MORGAN. Just one first.

LAURA. What'd Mother say? Oh, Morgan, - please - - *(She evades him as he tries to put his arms around her. She sits beside the tea table. In her flurried haste she drops her letter.)*

MORGAN. *(Picks up the letter, returns it to Laura. He sits on the arm of her chair. He leans over her and deliberately draws her head back against his shoulder and kisses her again.)* My little girl.

LAURA. Oh, Morgan, please - - - - please - - - You know we oughn't to!

MORGAN. You didn't do it. I did and I'm glad. And besides, why shouldn't I? You know, you have me for keeps,

whether you will or no.

LAURA. Sit over there and do be still. I have so much to tell you.

MORGAN. *(Sits in chair on other side of fire.)* Who's been writing to you?

LAURA. Geraldine.

MORGAN. Geraldine Gunne?

LAURA. Yes. That's what I want to talk to you about.

MORGAN. I hope she and her ideas are still safe in New York.

LAURA. You needn't talk in that kind of voice. She has done wonders for me. All our plans have materialized beyond our fondest dreams. *(Holds letter so that he can read a phrase.)* There!

MORGAN. Piffle! You'll never do it.

LAURA. Oh won't I?

MORGAN. Have you told your Mother?

LAURA. *(Noticeably crestfallen.)* No. I haven't told Mother yet. You see,

I didn't know myself that it was all settled until this afternoon.

MORGAN. *(Relieved.)* Oh well, there is no use crossing that span of concrete until we get to it.

LAURA. Mother will make an awful fuss.

MORGAN. *(Cheerfully.)* Yes, I'm afraid she will. Believe me, there will be some excitement when your intentions are made known in the bosom of your adoring family.

LAURA. More than intentions. This time I'm really in earnest. I think, I'll change my name to Laurette, Laura is so ugly.

MORGAN. Let me suggest a change you might make in your name.

LAURA. What?

MORGAN. Don't you know? Can't you guess?

LAURA. Oh Morgan! When I'm talking about the most important decision of my life!

MORGAN. *(Hotly.)* Important! And I suppose it isn't important for a man to want a girl to marry him? Isn't being a wife important enough?

LAURA. That depends on the man.

MORGAN. Laura!

LAURA. Don't be cross. Come, let's try the new dance if we're going to.

MORGAN. *(Starts Victrola.)* We should worry. Come on.

LAURA. *(Holding back.)* You do think I'm in earnest about this. Don't you, Morgan?

MORGAN. *(Makes her dance.)* Don't spoil anything as good as this by arguing. *(They dance to end of record.)*

LAURA. *(Fans herself furiously with her handkerchief.)* Wasn't that a perfect dream!

MORGAN. *(Leans ardently over her.)* And tonight - - tonight in my little car. The wind racing by. The very stars will envy me.

LAURA. *(Troubled.)* I'm awfully afraid Mother won't let me go alone with you, Morgie dear. Now let's try the fox trot - - Oh - - Mother - -

*(Mrs. Cort comes in. She is a slender, attractive woman of strong personality, who has made the most of her own life and taken a vital interest in the lives of those about her. She has absolute confidence in her judgment of what she calls "the wise course" for herself and others to follow. She prefers to do all the selecting.)*

LAURA. Mother! Where'd you come from? Morgan and I were trying our new dance for the Club, tonight. *(She is flurried and visibly afraid of her Mother.)*

MORGAN. *(Shakes hands with Mrs. Cort.)* How do you do?

MRS. CORT. How are you, Morgan? How is the dancing?

MORGAN. Fine! Are you and Mr. Cort going tonight?

MRS. CORT. Yes, for a while. This little girl of ours keeps us busy. How did you get along with your new dance, Laura?

LAURA. Pretty well. It's easy with Morgan.

MRS. CORT. Has your father come yet? There he is now. I hear his key.

MORGAN. I must run along. Good-bye, Mrs. Cort. See you later, Laura. What time shall I stop for you?

*(Mrs. Cort watches them keenly, but not unkindly as they walk to door. Laura and Morgan reach door as Cort comes in. He pinches his daughter's cheek lovingly. He shakes hands cordially with Morgan. He goes to Mrs. Cort, who comes toward him, puts his arm around her.)*

CORT. Well, little woman! *(Sees Morgan is leaving, walks toward door again.)* Not going, Morgan?

MORGAN. I must, Sir. See the ball game?

CORT. I tell you that was some game, m'boy.

MORGAN. You bet. Isn't that little shortstop a pippin? *(They exit together into hall. Mrs. Cort sits down beside the center table. Laura pours her a cup of tea.)*

LAURA. Tea, Mother?

MRS. CORT. No, dear, I had some at Mrs. Day's.

LAURA. Morgan asked me to drive to the Club with him tonight.

MRS. CORT. Alone?

LAURA. Yes.

MRS. CORT. Impossible.

LAURA. *(Holds herself in.)* Why?

MRS. CORT. Are you engaged to him?

LAURA. Of course not. What has that to do with it?

MRS. CORT. Everything. Isn't it enough for me to say, it is improper for a young girl to drive around the country with men unchaperoned?

LAURA. How absurd! I'm going. I'm old enough to decide for myself.

MRS. CORT. *(Goes to Laura, puts her arm around her very gently.)* Please, Laura, help me when I want to help you.

LAURA. *(Pushes her Mother's arm off.)* Help me! You hate me, I believe. You begrudge me every little bit of fun.

MRS. CORT. That is foolish. When you talk like that it shows the child you are.

LAURA. I'm not a child! I'm twenty years old.

MRS. CORT. You are my child and after all these years, I should know what is best for my daughter. You can't guess the pitfalls I see, all around you. It seems to me a mother must watch over her daughter.

LAURA. *(Passionately.)* But, that continual watching is something awful.

MRS. CORT. Why, Laura dear, your whole life could be ruined so easily. This party seems so innocent and jolly, but, it's the little things that make the big difference in the end.

LAURA. I don't care, I'm old enough to decide for myself and I'm going alone with Morgan.

MRS. CORT. Laura, as long as you are under this roof, you shall obey your parents. Do you hear?

LAURA. *(Facing her Mother.)* Yes, I hear, but I'm going just the same. Even if you are my Mother, you are not going to keep me home tonight.

MRS. CORT. You won't have to stay home. You may go with your Father and Mother.

LAURA. *(On verge of tears, furiously.)* I won't - - - I won't. The other girls are driving alone with men and I'm going too. I won't be made a baby of.

MRS. CORT. Laura - - -

LAURA. Why can't you treat me as though I were grown up? I am, you know.

MRS. CORT. *(Sadly.)* You are still a child to me.

LAURA. All the girls of twenty, that

I know, do pretty much as they want to.

MRS. CORT. It doesn't make any difference what the rest of the world is doing, so long as my conscience is clear, that I am doing my duty by my family.

LAURA. Yes, you keep your conscience clear at the expense of all my good times. I'm - just so tired - - - *(Laura bursts into tears. She rushes from room, almost running against Cort, who returns after seeing Morgan off.)*

CORT. Hoity-toity! What's the matter? *(Laura exits without answering.)*

*(Cort sits down in arm chair on opposite side of table from Mrs. Cort. Spreads newspaper slowly across knees. He takes out spectacles and polishes them. Then looks inquiringly at Mrs. Cort.)*

CORT. What's it all about this time, Ann?

MRS. CORT. The same old story, Laura and I cannot agree.

CORT. I can't understand you two.

Don't you think, you might display a little more self-control?

MRS. CORT. I haven't any when it comes to my struggle with Laura. While I am her Mother, she must obey me - - - she must.

*(Cort takes up paper and begins to read. Mrs. Cort sits staring out before her, She gets up suddenly, walks around table and sits down on the arm of Cort's chair. She takes the paper away.)*

MRS. CORT. No, you can't read yet. I have something to say first.

CORT. Well, be quick. Dinner will be ready soon and I must dress first for this dance at the Club.

MRS. CORT. Yes - - yes - - I only want to tell you I have decided to go to Europe with Mary Browne.

CORT. What! *(Turns and looks at her as though he had not heard correctly.)*

MRS. CORT. I've made up my mind. I must go away.

CORT. And leave me and Laura? Ann, are you crazy?

MRS. CORT. Never saner in my life. *(Laura comes to door. She stands there, half hidden by the curtain. She listens unobserved by her parents.)*

CORT. You've never been separated from Laura since she was born.

MRS. CORT. Don't you think it about time I left her to herself a little - - - after what you saw tonight?

CORT. No, I do not. A woman's place is in her home, not running about Europe alone.

MRS. CORT. It won't be easy to go. But the opportunity has come just at the right time.

CORT. If you have no thought for me, what about Laura? Don't you think a Mother's place is beside her growing daughter?

MRS. CORT. That's just it. Laura is not growing, she is grown. She told me so herself this afternoon. We have lived so

closely together, that I didn't realize it. She and I are killing the best in each other. I have exacted obedience from her without allowing her the right to have opinions. We can't argue a question out on its merits, without ending in a scene and my commanding her to do as I wish. Bending her will to mine, wounding her pride, killing her spirit. Now, it is only a question of vital importance or illness draws us together.

CORT. As long as she is under my roof, she shall be made to obey you.

MRS. CORT. *(Shakes her head.)* No, that is not the way. This evening we had a scene over her riding alone with a man. Among other things, she said, I'd forgotten that she had grown up. And she has. It is quite true. She should be free to choose, to make her own decisions. No one knows it better than I. But the minute we are alone together and begin to talk, we begin a scene, which always ends in my treating her like a child and usurping all the authority. I can't

help it. Oh, William, don't you understand? Laura mustn't be as I was with my Mother, always under her supervision, without a chance ever to be alone or to know herself.

CORT. Darned if I do! Know herself! Be alone! Why should she want to be alone?

MRS. CORT. *(Stretches out her hands passionately before her.)* You men are born free. Of course you can't understand. You go and come as you will. While, we women, with this precious thing called Life in our hands, give it up at last, without ever having realized we had it.

CORT. What has this got to do with your going away?

MRS. CORT. The only way Laura can find herself, is for me to go away and leave her free. Don't you understand, now, William?

*(Laura rushes forward to the center of the stage. Her parents turn in consternation.)*

LAURA. Oh, Mother, I understand - - I do - - - I do!

MRS. CORT. Laura!! You!!

CORT. Child, this is no place for you.

LAURA. Yes, it is, Father. I never dreamed Mother understood it all. I heard everything you've said to Dad, so, now I'm going to tell you my plans. *(Holds up her letter.)* This letter is from Geraldine Gunne.

MRS. CORT. What has she to do with your plans?

LAURA. She has gotten me a place in "The Blue Moon" Company. They begin rehearsing week after next in New York. So, you see, I am the one who is going away.

CORT. You - - my daughter, on the stage!

LAURA. Yes, Dad, I just had to. Geraldine and I made our plans, and through the Dramatic School we got our chance.

MRS. CORT. And you made your plans without consulting your parents?

LAURA. And if I had. What en-

couragement would they have given me?
*(Mrs. Cort sits slowly down on the sofa.)*

CORT. They would have nipped such aspirations in the bud, as they intend doing now. What can you two be thinking of anyway? What's the matter with this home?

LAURA. Nothing, Dad, there never was a dearer home. But, tie a dog to his house, he will strain and pull at his leash, strain to be free. He wants to roam and prowl for himself - - be a free dog. No matter how beautiful his home.

MRS. CORT. Laura, you feel that?
*(Laura turns eagerly toward her Mother.)*

LAURA. Yes, Mother, yes, I do. Can't you hear the world calling? Can't you see the men and women hurrying by, beckoning, beckoning. Oh, it is Life - - Life - - and I am a part of it. I must go, I must. You know, Mother, you know.

MRS. CORT. *(Slowly.)* And I was going to free you!

LAURA. Isn't it best for me to free

myself? You could never have left Dad. And he would have surely passed away without you. You know, you were doing it for me, but my way is the best.

CORT. Why can't you follow your Mother's example and marry and settle down, like a sensible girl? Let a man take care of you.

LAURA. Dad, I'll marry some day, but not to be taken care of.

CORT. You'll change your mind.

LAURA. No, I won't. You have given me a modern brain, full of ideas for the advancement of women. How can I follow the old ways? We girls are learning to take care of ourselves.

MRS. CORT. How can I let you go? How can I?

LAURA. Why do women have children, but to let them go out into the world, fitted for work? Not to keep them back, by strapping a burden of old habits and conventions to our backs, so we can't lift our heads

to see our own futures. Oh Mother, help me. You do understand, for I heard all you said to Dad.

MRS. CORT. William, I'm going to help her! *(She goes to Laura and takes her in her arms.)*

LAURA. Mother, you'll let me go?

MRS. CORT. Yes, dear, and I begin to see my freedom in yours.

CORT. *(Reproachfully.)* My little girl - - - The apple of my eye!

LAURA. The apple of your eye has hung on this family tree long enough. It's going to drop off and roll around a bit. *(She holds out her hand to her Father.)* Come, Dad, you too. I couldn't get along without you. Say yes.

CORT. *(Puts his arms around them both.)* Well, when you two form a close corporation, what am I alone? *(He takes out his watch.)* How about dinner? If I'm to dress for that dance, we'd better go, Ann.

MRS. CORT. *(Kisses Laura.)* Come on, William.

CORT. You'd better hurry and dress, little girl.

LAURA. Alright, you blessed lambs, I'll come in a minute.

*(They exit. Laura walks slowly to fire, looks thoughtfully into it. After a few seconds, Morgan Terry comes in with a box of flowers in his hand. He goes up softly behind Laura. He puts his hands over her eyes after dropping the flowers with his hat and stick into a chair)*

*(She whirls around.)*

LAURA. Morgan, where'd you drop from?

MORGAN. I brought you these.

*(Gives her flowers, violets. Laura takes them from box. She buries her face in them.)*

LAURA. Morgan, you dear!

MORGAN. *(Puts his hands on her shoulders.)* Laura, for you I'd - - -

LAURA. *(She puts her hand on his coat and pushes him from her.)* Listen, I'm

going to have my chance. I'm going to New York. And Mother is going to help me go. Think of it! *(Softly.)* She was wonderful - - - my Mother!

*(Morgan pulls roughly away from her.)*

MORGAN. And what about me and my love for you? Laura, marry me and we can find that freedom you talk so much about, together.

LAURA. No, dear, I've decided that's a thing I must find alone. Then - - - Morgan - - -

*(Laura backs toward door, Morgan follows fascinated.)*

MORGAN. Then, Laura?

LAURA. *(Stops a minute in the doorway.)* Then, if you still care, after I've made my terms with the world. Then - - - Morgan - - - maybe - - - *(She exits.)*

*(Morgan stands and looks at the door. He turns, slowly picks up his hat and stick.)*

MORGAN. I wonder if the firm has a branch in New York?

CURTAIN.

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